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Information received from the United Nations system**

United Nations Development Fund for Women

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

I. United Nations Development Fund for Women

Summary

Since 1994, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has been developing projects and programmes that respond to the need to incorporate indigenous issues to the forefront of its agenda. Integrating indigenous women's rights is fundamental to UNIFEM, and it seeks to more fully develop and expand its existing projects while eliciting the cooperation and support of other United Nations agencies.

The UNIFEM programme focuses on advocacy for indigenous women's rights and eliminating discrimination. Its approach rests on mainstreaming gender and women's human rights in its programme by engaging indigenous groups, particularly women, boys and girls, and enhancing civic engagement through strategic partnerships between associations and advocacy groups.

Mainstreaming gender within the larger context of indigenous rights is at the core of the UNIFEM project implementation strategy, and UNIFEM recognizes that incorporation of indigenous women's issues and distinct interests is an ongoing process which it seeks to support.

* E/C.19/2006/1.

** The present document was submitted late in order to ensure the inclusion of the most recent information.

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A. Response to recommendation addressed exclusively to the particular agency

Recommendation 119

1. Within the framework of inter-agency work in Central America, UNIFEM, with the cooperation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration and the Pan-American Health Organization, held a regional meeting of indigenous women and United Nations system organizations in Panama in 2005, where a regional inter-agency support group for indigenous peoples was established. Jointly with academic research institutions and civil society organizations, UNIFEM developed a follow-up strategy with indigenous women's organizations in Central America and Mexico to promote respect for indigenous women's rights. The proposal has been developed within the inter-agency framework and is part of the Fund's participation in the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. UNIFEM has been part of the creation of a working group in Mexico that will contribute the indigenous women's perspective to the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework process (UNFPA, ECLAC and the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights).

2. In the framework of the inter-agency work in Ecuador, UNIFEM, under a memorandum of understanding between UNHCR and UNFPA, supports displaced indigenous women near the northern border of Ecuador in issues of sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. In addition, UNIFEM supported a national survey that included violence against women with an ethnic perspective and has been participating in the inter-agency multicultural thematic group, ensuring that gender mainstreaming is included, and particular attention has been given to the preparations for the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

3. UNIFEM is an active member of the task force on indigenous women of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and contributed to the task force's publication entitled "Indigenous Women and the United Nations System: Good Practices and Lessons Learned" by providing two cases on its work with indigenous women in Bolivia and Ecuador.

Recommendation 120

4. UNIFEM has been in close consultation with indigenous women's organizations involved in the first-world fair of indigenous women art makers, to be held in Tijuana, Mexico, in April 2006, with a view to supporting the participation of indigenous women in this Fair.

B. Response to recommendations addressed to one or more agencies or to the United Nations system in general under one or more items of the Permanent Forum's mandate

5. UNIFEM strengthened its partnership with indigenous women and leaders of Latin America and the Caribbean, ensured their active participation and facilitated subregional meetings to identify priorities and make recommendations for agency support. UNIFEM has organized an inter-agency dialogue to listen to the demands and priorities of indigenous women, which led to the development of a three-year regional programme for Mexico and Central America and the leveraging of resources from United Nations agencies to support said programme.

6. UNIFEM has stressed the agenda of indigenous women in two projects in the Central American region, especially related to the economic rights and political participation of indigenous women in Guatemala.

7. Indigenous women's issues were incorporated into the sixth annual international meeting on gender statistics in Aguascalientes, Mexico, organized by UNIFEM, the Mexican National Women's Machinery and the National Statistics Office. Representatives from 14 countries attended this meeting, which addressed the need for special indicators for indigenous groups. As a result, a working group on gender statistics for indigenous populations was set up to follow up the meeting. In Ecuador, UNIFEM supported a capacity-building workshop on mainstreaming of indigenous and ethnic issues in the production of statistics.

8. Regarding the work with indigenous women's organizations and participation, the UNIFEM office and the Andean region have supported a consultation with indigenous women in the five Andean countries on their priorities on political participation to construct an indigenous women's agenda to be launched in Quito. The UNIFEM Southern Cone office supported the Paraguayan national indigenous women's network to organize the second national meeting of indigenous women and to contribute to the strengthening of CONAMURI, the Paraguayan indigenous women's group. Finally, UNIFEM supported indigenous women's networks and advocacy for the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, which contributed to the approval of a resolution sponsored by Bolivia on indigenous women's rights.

II. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Summary

One of the mandates of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development is to research ways to protect traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities. The research is intended to make an in-depth, practical and substantive contribution to policy dialogue and consensus-building on the topic. It will be available as an information document for the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in March 2006 in Curitiba, Brazil.

9. The mandate adopted at the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (Bangkok, 2000) to study ways to protect traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of local and indigenous communities and enhance cooperation on research and development on technologies associated with the sustainable use of biological resources was renewed at the eleventh session, held in June 2004.

10. The protection of traditional knowledge is an important issue for indigenous groups, yet many feel that the intellectual property system fails to adequately safeguard traditional knowledge. A number of actions have been proposed by developing countries and others in order to redress the imbalances in the intellectual property system at the international level. One key proposal is to require the disclosure of the origin or source of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge in relevant patent applications. This would help countries keep track of how their genetic resources are being used and patented abroad. Such a requirement could also include evidence of prior informed consent and benefit-sharing.

11. In response to an invitation by the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2004, UNCTAD commissioned a research paper entitled "Analysis of options for implementing disclosure of origin requirements in intellectual property applications". The paper argues that there is a need for an international system of mandatory disclosure of origin requirements and outlines such a system. It is intended to make an in-depth, practical and substantive contribution to policy dialogue and consensus-building on the topic. It will be available as an information document for the March 2006 meeting in Curitiba, Brazil.

12. UNCTAD is also carrying out research into further possible measures connected with the protection of traditional knowledge, such as an international regime for the recognition of national regulations on access and benefit-sharing.